

WASHINGTON – The House of Representatives is preparing to pass a final omnibus appropriations bill later today, which includes an additional \$17 million for the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to protect American kids from dangerous toys imported from China.

The provision, taken from the bipartisan Import Safety Act of 2007 (H.R. 3100), was inserted after a formal request last month by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), the author of the bill and a member of the Financial Services Subcommittee, which funds the CPSC. The final omnibus bill includes \$80 million for the CPSC, \$17 million above the President's Fiscal Year 2008 request.

"As American families run to the stores for last-minute holiday shopping, stopping dangerous Chinese toys from entering the U.S. market must remain a top priority for the Congress," said Kirk, co-chair of the bipartisan U.S.-China Working Group. "We need to do a better job of testing imports before they ever reach store shelves in America."

Kirk, along with U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), introduced the Import Safety Act of 2007 in July amid a flurry of toy recalls, including Thomas the Tank Engine, Elmo, Big Bird and Dora the Explorer.

In November, the CPSC issued nine recall notices for hazardous toys made in China. Most significantly, on November 7, 2007, the CPSC recalled about 4.2 million toxic Aqua Dots after a 20-month-old child swallowed several dots and slipped into a coma.

Just before Thanksgiving, Kirk sent a letter to Chairman Jose Serrano and Senator Dick Durbin – the chairmen of the key House and Senate subcommittees that fund the CPSC – urging them to boost CPSC's funding level by another \$20 million for Fiscal Year 2008.

"As we approach the House-Senate conference on the Financial Services Appropriations bill, I want to work with you to increase our support to the CPSC by another \$20 million to fund additional overseas testing and inspections," Kirk wrote. "I want to work with you to send a strong message to American families that the U.S. Congress is doing all it can to keep children safe from dangerous toys."

During an August congressional mission to China, Kirk and Larsen reviewed details of deploying CPSC personnel to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. U.S. Ambassador to China Sandy Randt already has prepared contingency plans for the addition of CPSC personnel to Beijing, according to Kirk.